

## **Need and Rationale**

Collections throughout the state of Alaska face numerous challenges complicated by the array of federal, state, local, tribal and other entities involved; the vast geographic area encompassed; severe inclement weather accompanied by frequent environmental emergencies; and difficult and costly access to goods, services, and training opportunities. Despite its relatively undeveloped status, Alaska supports hundreds of facilities responsible for collections. While the Heritage Preservation Website's list of 29 Alaskan institutions responding to the Heritage Health Index (HHI) survey adequately represents a cross section of institutions, it fails to reflect the depth of any single constituent area (libraries, archives, museums, tribal cultural centers etc.). For example, only 9 of more than 80 museums, 7 of 120 libraries, 3 of 200 tribal entities, and 2 archives responded. We estimate that there are over 1000 collection holding entities in the state including all libraries, museums, tribal organizations, institutions of higher learning, state archives, municipal archives, church archives, and service organization archives. Proper stewardship of these dispersed collections necessitates a coordinated network of trained individuals with access to regional or state mentors.

Following the Connecting to Collections (CTC) meeting in Washington, DC, the Alaska delegates (including the Alaska State Museum Curator, Alaska State Librarian, University library staff, tribal representative), with assistance from other State Library and Archive specialist, met to discuss priority needs for state collections. The group reviewed the HHI recommendations and noted that – as detailed in survey results for the nation as a whole – the condition of much of Alaska's archival collections is unknown and thus in jeopardy. Although the history of the first peoples in Alaska dates back more than 10,000 years, the archival history of the territory and state of Alaska is relatively recent; the Alaskan Purchase occurred in 1867 and statehood was achieved in 1959. Consequently, many archival materials are still available in the form of photographs, paper documents and sound or film recordings from these and other important events. However, the majority of personnel charged with caring for Alaskan archival collections have limited training in collections care and assessment. Although there are currently 3 objects conservators working in the state, none have specialized training in archival based media. In fact there has never been a paper or archives conservator working permanently in Alaska. This has lead to a huge backlog of treatment issues and a pervasive lack of technical knowledge on how to assess and care for these collections.

The Alaska CTC delegates identified the growing and persistent need for more effective conservation of archival material collections (both paper-based and electronic media) held by museums, libraries, and tribal repositories as a statewide priority. Specifically, the delegates noted that existing collections must be identified, conditions assessed, skilled personnel located and appropriate preservation methods implemented.

We propose to develop a mechanism by which the expertise needed to develop long-term safe conditions for Alaska's archival collections can be achieved. This proposal responds to all of the 4 primary HHI recommendations. First, the project will provide safe conditions for Alaskan archival collections in the long-term through partnership building and networking, training, and long range planning. Second, we anticipate that the proposed network of collections management staff and volunteers will receive training which will assist them in developing emergency plans. Third, the project focuses on identifying not only collections in need, but responsible staff and/or volunteers capable of assisting in collections management and care. Last, we believe the project will garner extensive public and private support for Alaska's collection treasures through distribution of a printed brochure, newsletters, and website but more importantly, through the development of a grassroots network of volunteers throughout the state.

## The Planning Process

The objectives of the proposed planning project are to:

1. Obtain the necessary skilled personnel to implement the planning process.
2. Collect and database information on extant collections, collection managers, and available expertise in the state of Alaska.
3. Develop a grassroots volunteer network of individuals working toward protecting the State's treasured collections.
4. Plan for a series of meetings/workshops focused on archival collections care.

**Action 1. Within 2 weeks of receipt of funds, an Advisory Group Board will be ratified.** One representative from each of the partner organizations will serve on the Advisory Group Board that will oversee general project direction (see Table 1 below). The group will exchange information primarily through emails and teleconferences but will also meet in person once during the project period. Decisions will be made by group consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, the Alaska State Librarian will determine the course of action.

**Expected Results:** Assembling the Advisory Group Board will ensure that a broad array of constituents are involved in identifying planning needs, relevant communities, and available expertise.

**Product:** Advisory Group Board membership list. Notes from Board meetings.

**Action 2. Within 1 month of receipt of funds, a project coordinator will be hired.** The Alaska State Library will advertise for and hire a half-time project coordinator. The coordinator will report directly to the Director of the Division of Libraries Archives and Museums and will be charged with 3 primary tasks:

1. Gathering data on archival media collections and community expertise throughout the state.
2. Creating a grassroots knowledge network with membership drawn from within various communities.
3. Planning a series of statewide workshops and training sessions on archival collections care.

This information and preliminary work will be used to apply for the Connecting to Collections Implementation Grant.

**Expected Results:** The project coordinator will be focus entirely on implementing the planning process and will ensure that actions described in the proposal are completed in a timely manner.

**Products:** Job recruitment description and job contract.

**Action 3. Within 2 months of receipt of funds, the project coordinator will develop a brochure.** The project coordinator will produce a one-page brochure describing the IMLS's nationwide Connecting to Collections efforts and the Alaska-specific planning process which can be distributed to entities responsible for collections within the state. The brochure will also be made available to other interested organizations and individuals to increase public awareness of collections issues and efforts to preserve Alaska's collections.

**Expected Results:** The brochure will raise public awareness of the proposed planning process as well as the need to improve collections care in the state.

**Products:** A one-page brochure.

**Action 4: Within 2 months of receipt of funds, the project coordinator, with assistance from the Advisory Group, will identify communities to be included in the planning process.** Communities will primarily represent geographic areas but may also include social, religious, or tribal communities. For example there may be a need for a coordinator/mentor for all tribal entities in the state or a regional coordinator/mentor for archival material on the Aleutian island chain.

**Expected Results:** The process of identifying and contacting potential communities and community representatives will – in and of itself – raise awareness of the project and the need for enhanced collections care. Many of the individuals contacted during this action will also be recruited to assist in future planning efforts. A comprehensive list of communities with collections management responsibilities will also be useful to numerous entities (including IMLS, Museums Alaska, Alaska State Libraries, Alaska State Museum, National Museum of the American Indian) in future projects.

**Products:** A list of communities with collections management responsibilities and associated contact information.

**Action 5: Within 5 months of receipt of funds, the project coordinator will begin developing a grassroots volunteer network organization based on the successful Save Outdoor Sculpture model.** This organization will be called the Archive Rescue Corps (ARC). Long-term, this organization will be coordinated by the State Division of Libraries Archives and Museums (SLAM) thereby assuring a life beyond the grant period. The project coordinator will recruit a contact person within each community who will take the lead in archival preservation either as a paid employee of an existing entity or as an interested individual. The project coordinator will also identify persons with specific archival preservation expertise within the state to act as community mentors and/or regional coordinators. The project coordinator will contract to have an ARC logo developed, will prepare a mission statement for the ARC organization, and will develop a listserve and website to be hosted on the state computer network to help coordinate ARC activities. The website will serve as a clearinghouse for preservation information and training opportunities. Information collected in Action 4 will assist in this effort.

**Expected Results:** The state of Alaska encompasses an area equivalent to all the states east of the Mississippi River with small, isolated communities spread throughout the state. The only way to achieve lasting benefits in archival preservation will be to harness the energies of knowledgeable volunteers and mentors and coordinate them through a statewide organization. ARC will serve as such a mechanism.

**Products:** ARC logo. ARC mission statement. List of ARC members. ARC website and Listserve.

**Action 6: Within 6 months of receipt of funds, the project coordinator will develop a statewide database of archival media collections and archival expertise in the state.** With assistance from the Advisory Group and individuals contacted during Actions 4 and 5, the project coordinator will compile information on extant collections within the state as well as individuals with specialized preservation knowledge. This information will be gathered by the project coordinator during a survey effort with a follow-up. Particular effort will be focused on identifying unknown or lesser known collections. The database will include the following types of information:

Collections data:

1. Medium type (Paper, Audio, Video, or Film)
2. Format (i.e. photographs, maps, books, letters, documents, 8mm film, VHS or Beta, vinyl record or reel-to-reel, digital)

3. Condition (including whether it is “safe”)
4. Encoding
5. Availability/safety of playback machine

Community expertise:

1. Types of expertise available in each community
2. Availability of necessary resources for that community
3. Existing record keeping in the community
4. Plan for effectively gathering this information if not currently available.

**Action 7: Within 7 months of receipt of funds, the project coordinator will start to develop and plan for a series of statewide workshops and training sessions on archival collections care.** The coordinator will plan an initial gathering for all ARC volunteers to take place in early 2009 in Anchorage. This meeting will include training sessions conducted by conservators and other specialists identified by the Advisory Group Board to equip volunteers to return to their community with the appropriate knowledge to begin detailed assessments of their collections, implement preventive conservation measures, develop emergency plans, and raise public and private awareness and support for their particular collections. Other workshops and training sessions will be provided throughout 2009 to keep the momentum going for the ARC program and to educate new volunteers or replacements.

The ARC meetings/training sessions in 2009 will coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of statehood for Alaska. This will be a time of renewed interest and research into the history of the state. With the gathering enthusiasm for commemorating each community’s contribution to the formation of the state there will be ample opportunity to recruit personnel and promote archival preservation.

**Expected Results:** A detailed plan for a statewide meeting and training sessions for ARC volunteers and coordinators/mentors including proposed budget, venues, session outlines, potential speakers, and attendees will be produced. This information will be useful in applying for Implementation Funds through Connecting to Collections and/or other grant opportunities.

**Products:** A written plan and budget.

**Partners and Institutional Responsibilities for Project Implementation (Table 1)**

Organization	Responsibilities
Alaska State Library	Planning, grant writing, hiring project coordinator, supervising project coordinator, Advisory Board
Alaska State Archives	Coordinating State and Municipal archives, Advisory Board
Alaska State Historical Library	Planning, grant writing, Project Director, recruitment of expertise in electronic media, Advisory Board
Alaska State Museums	Planning, grant writing, recruitment of conservators, Advisory Board
University of Alaska Fairbanks Library	Planning and regional coordination, Advisory Board
Hoonah Indian Association	Planning, grant writing, coordinating tribal collections, Advisory Board
Museums AK Professional Organization	Coordinating museums, Advisory Board
Tuzzy Consortium Library	Planning, Regional Coordination, Advisory Board
Alaska Historical Society	Coordinating Historical Societies, Advisory Board

## **Project Resources: Budget and Personnel**

### **Budget Justification**

**Personnel:** We request \$22,335 to support a project coordinator for 15 months at 0.5 FTE. Fringe benefits are calculated as \$9,090.

**Travel:** The travel costs of \$4,435 will pay for the project coordinator to travel to Anchorage to promote and recruit for the Archives Rescue Corps and to plan for the future meeting/training sessions, as well as for the 5 members of the Advisory Group Board who are not in Juneau (University of Alaska Fairbanks Library, Hoonah Indian Association, Museums AK Professional Organization, Tuzzy Consortium Library, Alaska Historical Society ) to travel to Juneau for an in person meeting of the Advisory Group Board.

**Supplies/Services:** Grant funds in the amount of \$1639 will pay for office supplies (paper, envelopes, etc.), postage and brochure printing in order for the project coordinator to communicate with caretakers of collections around the state and to promote the goals of the project.

**Contract:** The logo for the Archives Rescue Corps (ARC) will be designed by a local contractor. The rate of \$1000 for the contract is based on prevailing rates in Juneau AK.

### **Key Project Staff:**

Kay Shelton, the Director of the Division of Libraries Archives and Museums, will be the direct supervisor of the project coordinator.

Gladi Kulp, the Head of the State Historical Library, will be the Project Director

### **Sustaining the Planning Effort**

While we certainly hope to receive future Implementation Funds through IMLS, the proposed project was designed to produce long-term benefits to collections and collections managers in the state regardless. First and foremost, the formation of the grassroots volunteer organization, Archives Rescue Corps, will mobilize a group of individuals with responsibility for, or interest in, preserving the treasures of our state. This organization will continue to be coordinated through the State Division of Libraries Archives and Museums (SLAM) thereby assuring a life beyond the grant period. The planning grant will help find the archives and the expertise in each community as well as lay the foundation for the ARC organization and plan the meeting/training sessions. Should Alaska receive a Connecting to Collections implementation funds, they will support the meeting/training described in this proposal; should this funding not become available, we will have a plan which can be used to solicit funds through other granting sources. It is our sincere hope that the ideas and principles of ARC, through publications, press releases, sessions at professional conferences, web presence etc., will catch on and be used as models for other states to form grass roots volunteer organizations to improve archival preservation in their communities.